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POST-WAR PLANS OF THE FRENCH RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

Description

The post-war plans of the French Resistance Movement include a consideration of the purge, social and economic reconstruction, international policy, and political reforms.

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Summary

The French Underground is comprised of recruits from every part of the population. Since 1941 it has tended toward unity, both in organization and ideology, though there are divergences of viewpoint among Communists, Socialists, and other resistance groups. The underground's basic principles for post-war reconstruction, both stemming from nationalism, are: France must be once more a strong nation, internally and in external relations; France must be purified of the elements which caused the disaster.

The underground is most insistent on a purge of anti-national elements. Distinction in degrees of guilt is made among those to be purged, and the purge would extend to government bureaucracy, both local and national, and to corporative bodies and semi-public functions such as political parties, trade unions, financial institutions, and the teaching profession. A purge of the press (the underground believes) would lay the basis for a French press free from corruption and foreign subsidy. Financial groups would be purged of pre-war fifth column elements, collaborationists, and profiteers. The purge would be accompanied by the redress of disabilities and restoration of property to war prisoners, trade unions, Jews, and Freemasons.

The general orientation of the underground toward

problems of economic reconstruction is leftist. The underground believes that the state should exercise a greater measure of control over the economic system and that key industrial and financial institutions should be state-controlled or even state-owned. The trade union organizations (CGT and CFTC) will demand restoration of their rights and properties, as well as general improvements in labor legislation.

The underground is in favor of some sort of international organization or Federation of States. An international security system directed against Germany is regarded as an urgent necessity, with France allowed to assume a major role among the Allied Powers. The leftist groups have emphasized the possibilities of social and economic progress, and shown interest in the development of international trade union connections.

The eagerness to establish a "Fourth Republic," while accompanied by an adherence to democratic principles, indicates a determination to discard the Third Republic after the cancellation of the Vichy system. Procedure whereby a new constitution will be drawn up and ratified has not yet been decided upon, old methods being deemed unsatisfactory under the circumstances.

Among the issues which are likely to arise in planning a more stable government are strengthening the

Presidency, strengthening the cabinet, reforms in structure and role of parties, legislative control of the technical bureaucracy, and avoidance of oligarchical control. The Socialists and Communists propose broader powers for the electorate, while the right wing desires a stable administration. Their differences are likely to be balanced against a strong sense of the need for national unity.

POST-WAR PLANS
OF THE FRENCH RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Unity of Underground

The French underground is recruited from every part of the population ranging from Catholic and monarchist to Communist. The underground inherited from the Third Republic ideological dissensions that were both deep and wide. The history of the underground since 1941 has been in the main a process of unification, both in organization and ideology. This unification has come about in two ways: (1) the political experience gained in resistance, together with the political discussion carried on in the underground press, has brought about a definite measure of genuine agreement on basic principles; (2) the deeply felt need for French unity has created a willingness to reach a compromise on all immediate issues. At the present time, organizational unity exists through the creation (in May 1943) of a National Council of Resistance, composed of eight delegates from different resistance movements, two delegates from the two illegally reconstituted Trade Unions (CGT and CFTC), and six delegates from different illegally reconstituted political parties. The National Council of Resistance is also the main organ whereby ideological unification is being achieved.

The National Council of Resistance designates the representatives of metropolitan resistance to the Consultative Assembly in Algiers, and issues them instructions as to the policy to be pursued in the Consultative Assembly; the representatives of resistance in the Consultative Assembly form a caucus known as the group of resistance. The National Council of Resistance in France has set up various departments to coordinate the action and policies of resistance in various fields. One of these departments deals with post-war problems.

B. Divergences

In spite of this evidence of unification, and in spite of the overwhelming stress which resistance as a whole places on the need for maintaining French unity, as the only guarantee of restoring the strength of France, it cannot be said that resistance as a whole has only one policy for the period of provisional government and French reconstruction. The recent debate in the Consultative Assembly on the provisional government of France may serve as an illustration. Three main plans were offered: one offered by François de Menthon, member of the French Committee for National Liberation, but originally a representative of the underground organization Combat in the Consultative Assembly; one offered by Auriol in the name

of the Socialists; and one offered by the Communists. The Consultative Assembly's Commission on the reform of the state finally brought in a draft which was in essence a compromise between the proposals of de Menthon and those of the Socialists.[1] If there is disagreement on the relatively immediate issue of the provisional government, a fortiori there will be disagreement on the remoter aspects of post-war planning. A report on the post-war planning of the underground must take into account both the measure of general agreement, and the range of divergence. However, the determination of the underground to insure the realization of certain basic objectives is such that at the present time it appears most likely that the unity of the French underground on a program of post-war reconstruction will be achieved. The authority of the underground inside France is such that it can be said that if the underground is united on a program, the vast majority of the French people as a whole will be also.

C. Basic Principles

The basic inspiration of French resistance has been French nationalism. On the right, there are resistants who were originally sympathetic to Petain's program, the "National Revolution," but who were alienated by his

1. France (London), 25 January 1944.

foreign policy; on the left, the Communists have cast their mass propaganda almost exclusively in a nationalist tone. From this nationalism flow two basic principles for post-war reconstruction: France must be once more a strong nation, internally strong and strong in her external relations; France must be purified of the elements which caused the disaster.

II. THE PURGE

There is no point on which the underground as a whole is more insistent than on the necessity of a purge of anti-national elements from French public life.[1] The scope of the contemplated purge, which is adumbrated by the demands of representatives of resistance for a purge in North Africa, may be said to be three-fold.

A. Personnel

First there would be a purge of personnel. The underground makes a distinction in degrees of guilt. They want notorious quislings condemned to death as traitors by the speediest possible judicial procedure. They want the general run of collaborators immediately arrested and tried. Elements which are regarded as compromised, though not guilty of the persecution of patriots, they want removed from their functions.

It is generally held that the trials should be conducted by a special tribunal. This purge of administrative officials would be pursued in the government bureaucracy, both national and local. However, local officials are regarded as being in general less involved in traitorous activities, and in some cases, as having done the best they could under the circumstances.

1. Combat, No. 11, June 1942; Résistance, 23 January 1943.

The purge would also be pursued in corporative bodies other than the government: thus, the reconstituted political parties and trade unions have already embarked on a purge of their leadership and membership. In view of the general program of submitting key financial institutions to some sort of government control, it would follow that these bodies would also be purged. The same applies to other semi-public functions (for example, the teaching profession).[1]

Some resistance organizations have expressed the view that certain personalities representing the Third Republic leadership should be indited as sharing responsibility for the national disaster. This point of view is held by groups which have shown a critical attitude towards parliamentary democracy and political parties. These groups have always been in a minority in the resistance movement, and the discussions carried on during the last year, in the underground press and in the Consultative Assembly, show that these groups now recognize the fact that France as a whole wants a parliamentary democracy (in a purified form). As a result, they have softened their criticisms of the old parliamentary system. It is therefore doubtful whether there will be any trials directed toward putting responsibility on the Third Republic.

1. CID #51336, 13 December 1943; CID #39194.

B. Press

Second, there is proposed a purge of the press. Here again, events in North Africa presage similar trends in France. The underground takes the position in principle, that a newspaper should have ceased publication rather than to have continued to appear under German or Vichy censorship. A commission of resistant journalists in France is said to be drawing up provisions for a purge of the press. The names of collaborationist journalists appear on blacklists published in the underground press.

The purpose of the purge of the press is not primarily to exact exemplary retribution, but rather to lay the basis for a French press free from the corruption which the underground feels was among the factors responsible for the disaster. The statements which have been made by the underground on this subject show an awareness of the delicacy of the problems involved. On the one hand the principle of freedom of the press is affirmed, and the idea of a socialization of the press is rejected; on the other hand there is a strong determination to prevent a repetition of the pre-war situation in which both journalists and journals were known to be in the pay of foreign powers.[1]

1. Les Cahiers Politiques, No. 3, August 1943.

C. Finance and Industry

Third, a purge of financial and industrial circles is envisaged. The underground demands that the property of industrialists and bankers who have collaborated with the enemy be confiscated; also that a heavy assessment be imposed on those who have taken advantage of the prostrate condition of France for purposes of profiteering. This program is primarily motivated by the conviction that the big financial powers, the "Trusts," bear a heavy load of guilt, both for fifth column activities before and during the war, and for collaborating with the enemy since the armistice. The program is also related to the conviction, generally held by resistance, that a far larger measure of state-control over key industries and financial institutions is necessary in order to ensure that financial power shall be consistently devoted to the national interest.

D. Restitution

The underground is determined to accompany the purge of Vichy personnel by steps to secure redress of all sanctions and disabilities imposed on persons, by Vichy, for political views, membership in organizations such as trade unions or Freemasonry, or religious views. While certain immediate measures, such as the liberation of prisoners, can

easily be accomplished, a full restoration of civil rights and restitution of property will provide administrative difficulties. These difficulties will arise, for example, in the restoration of properties confiscated from Jews and Trade Unions. For some time after liberation problems arising out of restoration and restitution are likely to be issues in French public life.

III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION

A. Leftist Orientation

The general orientation of the underground toward problems of economic reconstruction is leftist. A majority of the underground papers include the word "Socialism" in their list of post-war goals. Even Catholic resistance shares this leftist orientation: for example, in the Catholic clandestine literature, Bernanos is the most widely quoted authority on social and economic affairs. It should, however, be remembered that the term "socialism," as generally used in Europe, has a vague connotation of social welfare legislation, (compare the Radical "Socialist" party in France).

1. State Control. Concretely, the underground papers agree on certain principles of social reconstruction. There is agreement that the state should exercise a greater measure of control over the economic system. The economic system is divided into two sectors: first, a sector where individual control should be unhampered; second, a sector which should be either state-controlled (according to the more conservative underground press) or state-owned (according to some of the more radical underground groups). In the sector which

should be either state-owned or state-controlled are listed key industrial and financial institutions, including heavy industry, transportation, chemical industry, electric power, coal and iron, petroleum, banking, and insurance.[1]

The problem of state-control is likely to become an immediate issue in France, in the form of the question of what is to be done with the Vichy-instituted corporative structures. While it seems to be generally agreed by the underground that the Corporation Paysanne should be immediately abolished, there is a difference of opinion as to whether the industrial and financial Comités d'Organisation should be abolished, as "instruments of the trusts," or retained, with a different personnel, as instruments of state-control along the lines outlined above. There can be little doubt that the French peasant remains devoted to the system of private ownership, and that none of the underground groups want to challenge his attitude on this question. However, some groups are thinking in terms of various forms of agricultural cooperatives, and stressing the role of publicly-owned services to supply the peasants with industrial products (machinery, fertilizer). It seems to be intended to continue the State-monopoly institution, the Office du blé, which has been in existence since the Front Populaire.[2]

1. Le Populaire, 7 November 1942; Combat (Algiers) #37-8; 5-12 December 1943; CID #39194; Franc-Tireur, November 1942, 20 March 1943; CID #48057: Défense de la France, 20 October 1943. CID #42958C; CID #48057.
2. CID #51336, 13 December 1943.

B. Trade Union Organizations

The national trade union organizations, the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) and the Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens (CFTC), which are recognized affiliates of the National Council of Resistance, are now working on a post-war program. It can be taken as certain that they will demand the abrogation of the Vichy Labor Charter, and a restoration of the rights and properties of their organizations.[1] On the question of trade union rights, there is some disagreement as to whether there should be a return to the status quo as of 1939, or as of 1936. In any case, it appears that resistance as a whole will support trade union demands for a restoration of the institution, in one form or another, of délégations du personnel (committees of employees for labor-management consultation).[2] The trade unions are also likely to demand improvements in the law for vacations with pay, and for retirement pensions, and also a public works program to guarantee jobs for the prisoners of war and French workers in Germany until their reemployment in private industry is possible. In view of the fact that since 1940 the gap between more or less frozen wages and continuously rising prices has become extremely acute,

1. CID #34811, 20 May 1943.
2. CID #51336, 13 December 1943: Combat (Algiers) #87-8, 5-12 December 1943

the provisional government will have the immediate problem of facing demands to increase wages while strengthening the control of prices.[1] The underground has also shown interest in the Beveridge plan, and, to a lesser extent, in Keynes' economic plans.[2]

1. Quatrieme Republique, (Algiers) December-January 1943/4.

IV. INTERNATIONAL POLICY

A. International Organization

As regards international policy, the underground has shown a positive orientation towards the following program:

There should be some sort of international organization. On the left, the Socialists show a disposition to favor a supra-national organization going farther than the League of Nations, "which should have its own budget, its own revenue from taxes, and perhaps its own government independent of the affiliated governments." They also have given some consideration to vesting this international organization with the economic functions of the international monopolies. The Socialists have also stood for moderate treatment of Germany.[1]

Other underground groups have given favorable consideration to the idea of a Federation of States, and specifically a European Federation.[2] However, this idea is also criticized; a representative of resistance has seen in the proposal a program of insulating Europe from the United States, whereas (he argues) international stability depends on the participation of the United States in world affairs.[3]

1. Council on Foreign Relations, Studies of American Interests in the War and in the Peace, #E.W.-C 16. (CID #52463). Le Populaire, November 1943;
2. Quatrième République, (Algiers) 25 December 1943; Liberer et Fédérer, 1-2 July-September 1942.
3. Combat (Algiers) 16 January 1944.

While abstract programs of international organization do not inspire universal enthusiasm, the idea of an international security system, directed against Germany, is regarded as an urgent necessity. It is probable that France will be intransigently suspicious of Germany for a long time. In this international security system, the French underground associates France with the United States, Great Britain, and the USSR, as countries called upon to play a major role in world stability.[1] The more nationalistic groups carry this thought further, and demand that the Allies shall not this time, as they did at the end of the first World War, hamper France's pursuit of national security by such means as "taking legitimate measures of self-defense in the Ruhr and the Rhineland."[2]

The leftist resistance groups which are in the majority, have emphasized the possibilities of social and economic progress implicit in such declarations of the United Nations as the Atlantic Charter. With them the phrase "the peace of the common man" is an accepted goal. These groups have also shown strong interest in the development of international trade union connections, not only in Europe, but also with the United States.

The French underground also wants a restoration of French sovereignty over all territory previously French.[3]

1. Combat, 17 October 1943.
2. Défense de la France, 20 April 1943, quoted in New Europe September 1943.
3. CID #48117; Libération, North Zone, 20 February 1943.

V. POLITICAL REFORMS

A. Principles

The key-word in the post-war political program of the underground is "the Fourth Republic."

On the one hand, the underground remains faithful to Republican principles. (In the case of elements who belonged to the extreme Right under the Third Republic, and were formerly critical or even hostile toward democratic principles, the experience of Vichy and German Fascism has produced a profound revulsion against Fascism in any form.) It follows that the first desire of the underground is the cancellation of the Vichy political system, together with all Vichy legislation of fascist inspiration.[1]

On the other hand, the underground envisages a future regime in France which will make a fresh start, rather than exhume the Third Republic. The underground holds that the thread of continuity of Third Republic legality has been broken. There is agreement that French constitutional processes cannot be set in motion again by summoning the National Assembly (the old Senate and Chamber in joint session), partly because these bodies include hopelessly

1. Les Cahiers Politiques, No. 3, August 1943; Combat, 17 October 1943; CID 739194; Libération, Zone Occupée, No. 91-4, 28 August-18 September 1942.

compromised elements, partly because the vote of pleins pouvoirs to Petain in July 1940 is regarded as tantamount to abdication. Nor can a provisional government be set up according to the procedure given in the Treveneuc Law (indirect election of a provisional assembly by the Conseils Generaux), likewise because it includes compromised elements.[1]

It is not only on grounds of technical legality that the underground regards the Third Republic as dead. The reenactment of the constitutional laws on which the Third Republic was based is also held to be out of the question. The resistants want a fresh start. Even the staunchest defenders of the Third Republic as against Vichy feel that many things about the Third Republic must be changed. It therefore follows that France must make a new constitution.[2]

B. Procedures

The procedures whereby a new Constitution would be drawn up and ratified have not been decided upon. This question will probably be clarified in the discussions of the provisional government which are scheduled at Algiers for this month (February 1944). Two alternatives have been proposed. One is that the new Constitution be drawn up by the provisional government and

1. CID #51336, 13 December 1943; PID Supplement on Clandestine Press, July-September 1943.
2. Les Cahiers Politiques, No. 3, August 1943.

submitted to the people in referendum.[1] It is unlikely that this procedure will be adopted, since it is regarded by many as undemocratic. The alternative procedure would be the election of a Constituant Assembly which would draw up the Constitution. It is generally held that the election of such a Constituant Assembly would have to wait until the return of the prisoners of war and French workers now in Germany.

It seems to be agreed that the provisional government, in drawing up regulations for the election of a Constituant Assembly, will itself bear responsibility for one constitutional change: women will be allowed to vote for the first time in French history. The role of women in resistance has dissipated the idea that there is a conflict in political attitudes between French men and women.

The outline of a new Constitution for France is still only in the formative stage. It may be anticipated that the political life of France in the interim period of provisional government will to a considerable extent center around a discussion of this problem, with rival programs being formulated, and parties or coalitions of parties being formed in their support. At this point it is only possible to indicate

1. CID #51336, 13 December 1943.

some of the issues which are likely to arise.

C. Issues

1. Strengthening Executive Branch. It is generally recognized that one of the chief weaknesses of the political system of the Third Republic was the instability of cabinets. There is a good deal of sentiment in favor of strengthening the powers of the Executive branch of the government, as one measure to overcome governmental instability. Some have advocated strengthening the powers of the President, for example, by giving him the power to dissolve the chamber, or by giving him a measure of control over the composition of cabinets. However, the French are traditionally suspicious of any "Presidential regime," which is associated in their minds with Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. Others advocate a strengthening of the powers of the cabinet, to be obtained by a strict limitation on the numbers of cabinet ministers, and perhaps by restricting the power of the Chamber to cause the downfall of a cabinet (e.g. by restricting the process of "interpellation," or by giving the cabinet a guarantee of a certain period of life).[1]

1. CID 851336, 13 December 1943: Combat (Algiers) No. 83, 12 December 1943; Les Cahiers Politiques, No. 3, August 1943; Résistance, 22 May 1943; CID 834809, 10 May 1943.

2. Party Reform. Another topic on which there has been a good deal of discussion is the reform of political parties. The feeling is widespread in France that the old political parties under the Third Republic lost sight of their function of serving the national interest by subservience to private interests and by preoccupation with electoral and parliamentary manoeuvres designed to secure power and patronage as ends in themselves. At one time some of the resistance groups envisaged a post-war role for the pure resistance movement as a substitute for the old political parties.[1] It is clear that they have lost their fight for this. It is now recognized that parties are indispensable. The debate now takes the form of a discussion of reforms in the structure and role of parties. The contention that the role of parties should be restricted is to be seen in proposals to establish the electoral machinery known as the scrutin de liste (voting for a slate pledged to a political program, rather than for individuals), and to abolish proportional representation and election by second ballot (to prevent unprincipled alliances of parties at the second ballot).[2]

1. Combat, No. 39, January 1943; Liberer et federer, No. 1-2, July-September 1942; OID #34809, 19 May 1943.
2. Combat (Algiers) No. 88, 12 December 1943; Les Cahiers Politiques, No. 3, August 1943.

3. Technical Bureaucracy. Another criticism of the politicians of the Third Republic is that they abdicated their powers in favor of the technical experts of the French bureaucracy. This criticism is aggravated by the feeling that the French bureaucracy (in the higher brackets) failed in its task, and was corrupted by fifth column elements which finally emerged as collaborationists. There is therefore a strong desire that the legislative branch should exercise continuous and effective control over the technical bureaucracy -- that it should really fulfil its role of political leadership.

One basic conviction is expressed by virtually the whole of resistance. It is that one of the chief weaknesses of the Third Republic was the subservience of French political machinery to an oligarchy of financial powers, often indifferent to the national interest. While specific measures, such as regulations governing electioneering expenses, are contemplated, it seems that a general solution is looked for rather in the direction of subordinating these financial interests to closer state supervision and control.[1]

D. General Programs

At the same time, proposals for strengthening the Executive and for restricting the role of political parties

1. CID #51336, 13 December 1943: Les Cahiers Politiques No. 3, August 1943; Waldeck-Rochet in France (London) 30 January 1944; CID #39194.

are viewed with some suspicion by the Left, particularly the Socialists and Communists who have at present the strongest political organizations inside France. They seem to take the position that the basic fault of the Third Republic was the failure of the people to exercise effective control over their leaders in matters of national policy. The Communists have proposed, for example, that the electors should have the power to annul the mandate of their representatives.[1] It therefore appears that the issue of Constitutional reform will reveal a Left wing, campaigning under the banner of more democracy, and a Right wing, campaigning under the banner of a strong and stable administration.

The Right and the Left will each advance its program as the one most conducive to strengthening the French nation. Their differences will probably be balanced against a strong sense of the need for national unity, a principle to which all groups profess allegiance, and on which the French people as a whole are likely to insist. The probability is that differences on constitutional reforms will be resolved in compromises, as seems to be happening in the cases of the different programs for provisional government.

1. Communist program outlined by Waldeck-Rochet in France (London), 25 and 30 Janaury 1944.